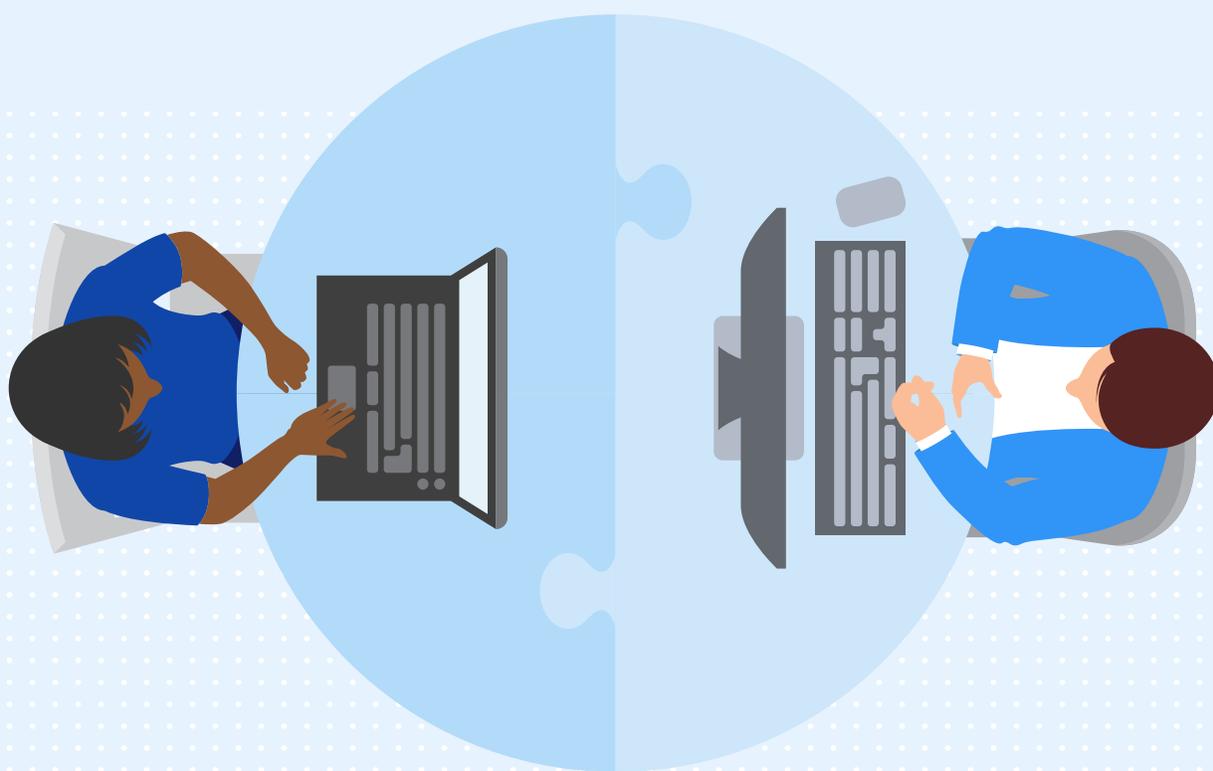nexthink

HR & IT: The Grand Alliance

INSIGHTS FROM SENIOR LEADERS ON HOW TO IMPROVE DIGITAL WELLBEING IN THE HYBRID WORKPLACE

Introduction

Our inspiration for this report started with a simple question:

How can HR (Human Resources) and IT (Information Technology) leaders solve the same modern work challenges?

We surveyed 100 HR & IT leaders across North America to find out. Never before have these two entities depended on each other so much as they do today. The unfamiliar demands of remote and hybrid work that were thrust upon organizations in 2020 challenged these teams to respond with smarter digital tools and communication strategies for employees—but as you'll soon read, both still come up short.

Whether it's preventing employee burnout and high turnover or collecting actionable feedback, each grapples with many of the same problems. Two sides of the same coin.

And that's because Digital Employee Experience (DEX) is an important piece of the overall Employee Experience (EX). Workers today internalize each and every little interaction they have with their organizations, and oftentimes, a single negative digital experience— whether it be a faulty Zoom call or one too many forced reboots— can be the final straw.

But here's the good news:

If you are an HR or IT decision-maker, **you can** solve the very problems highlighted in this report.

- **You can** counteract employee burnout and high turnover;

- **You can** improve HR-IT collaboration; and

- **You can** collect meaningful, robust experience data that answers your unique strategy questions.

"Employee Experience" can be a vague, daunting and elusive goal. This report will show you tangible management tips in each section from Nexthink customers who took proactive steps to resolve these hybrid and remote work challenges organizations face today. Yes, HR and IT can work together, and our customers will show you how.

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The True ROI of a *Great* Employee Experience

One term synonymous with Employee Experience and often quoted by HR and IT is employee engagement: Are your employees productive? Focused? Cooperative? Are they quite literally engaged in the very work they are doing?

It's been well documented engaged workers can unlock multiple benefits like:

Higher Profitability

- Some businesses report returns of more than 4x in average profit and 2x in average revenue compared with competitors[1].

Less Employee Turnover

- Highly engaged employees are 87% less likely to leave their companies[2].

Higher Customer Satisfaction

- In an MIT study of 281 companies, those with the strongest EX reported a Net Promoter Score which more than doubled those of weaker EX companies[3].

Better Brand Notoriety & Innovation

- Companies that invest in EX appear 28x as often in Fast Company's Most Innovative Companies; 11.5x as often in Glassdoor's Best Places to Work, and 2.1x in Forbes's list of the World's Most Innovative Companies[4].

Conversely, disengaged workers can cost companies billions in productivity loss—for example, many American organizations report losses of up to $550 billion a year due to a poor EX[5].

Of course, employee engagement (or EX) is in large part fashioned by HR and IT—each pulls the strings that can positively (or negatively) impact the workday.

And when IT issues occur, they can act like a thousand tiny cuts on the Employee Experience.

Just like how engaged workers can trigger a knock-on effect of positive outcomes for companies, so too can IT problems devolve in the opposite direction—when tech fails, it disrupts, distracts, and disengages even the best employee.

HR and IT have a vested interest in driving employee engagement, and both report that Digital Experience fuels Employee Experience and will continue to do so in 2022 and beyond.

1   Harvard Business Review. Why the Millions We Spend on Employee Engagement Buy Us So Little. https://hbr.org/2017/03/why-the-millions-we-spend-on-employee-engagement-buy-us-so-little
2   Gartner. Corporate Advocacy of Social Issues Can Drive Employee Engagement. https://www.gartner.com/smarterwithgartner/corporate-advocacy-of-social-issues-can-drive-employee-engagement/.
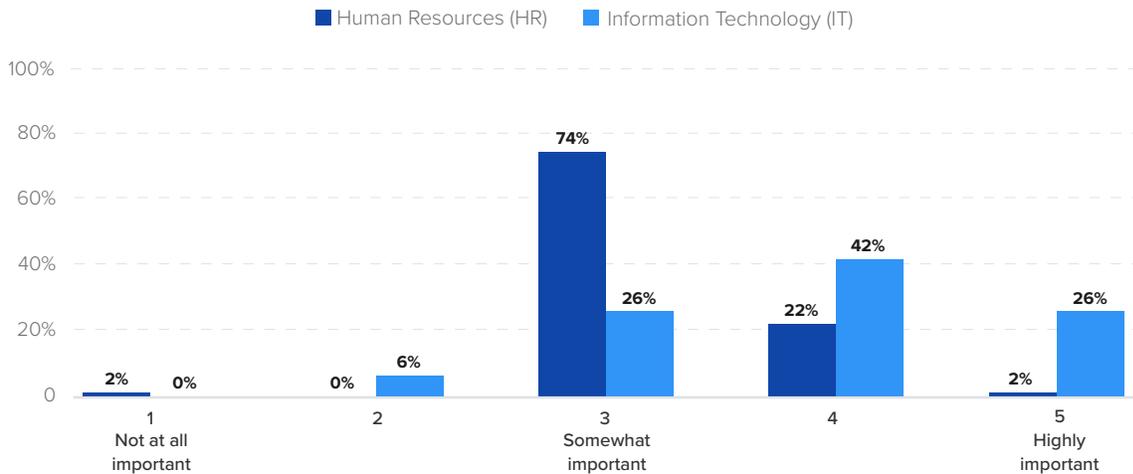3   MIT, Center for Information Systems Research. https://cisr.mit.edu/publication/2017_0601_EmployeeExperience_DerySebastian#fn_ref_1
4   Harvard Business Review. Why the Millions We Spend on Employee Engagement Buy Us So Little. https://hbr.org/2017/03/why-the-millions-we-spend-on-employee-engagement-buy-us-so-little
5   Forbes, 10 Timely Statistics About The Connection Between Employee Engagement And Wellness. https://www.forbes.com/sites/nazbeheshti/2019/01/16/10-timely-statistics-about-the-connection-between-employee-engagement-and-wellness/?sh=4eda5e4922a0

DIGITAL EXPERIENCE FUELS THE EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE

On a scale of 1-5, how important do you think your digital employee experience will be in shaping your employee's overall work experience in 2022 and beyond?

■ Human Resources (HR) ■ Information Technology (IT)

|	1 Not at all important	2	3 Somewhat important	4	5 Highly important
HR	2%	0%	74%	22%	2%
IT	0%	6%	26%	42%	26%

As much as 95% of HR and IT leaders regard the digital employee experience as at least somewhat important in shaping the overall employee work experience heading into 2022. However, most IT leaders (42%) rank the importance of DEX as a 4 out 5, while the majority of HR respondents ranked it a 3 out of 5.

Given that IT is responsible for preventing and solving IT issues, they are acutely aware of the impact these issues have on employees and their productivity. And those are just the issues they know about. Forty-five percent of the issues end users experience on a daily basis are not reported to the Service Desk.[6]

When you factor in technical issues on top of the challenges of remote and hybrid work, no IT professional would be surprised that, in fact, 22 minutes of employee productivity are lost every day due to IT issues.[7] But, some HR professionals might be. IT needs to report these issues so HR can help combat them. Because if they go unaddressed, they can lead to employee disengagement and burnout.

In the next section, we offer tips for how IT and HR can combat these issues.

22
Minutes

22 minutes of employee productivity are lost every day due to IT issues

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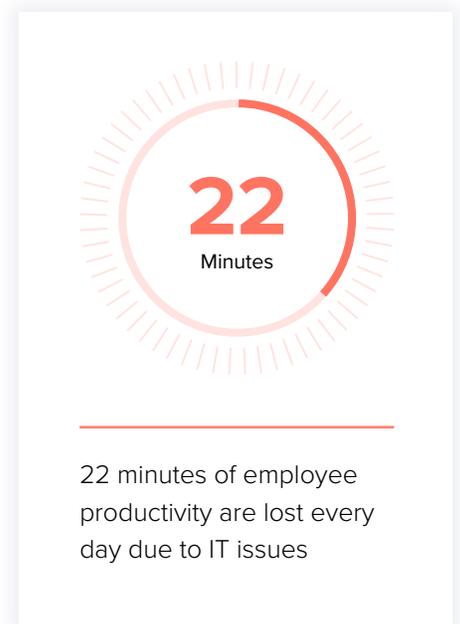
[6] Same as above.
[7] Nexthink. The Experience 2020 Report. https://www.nexthink.com/resource/experi-ence-2020-report/

Employee Burnout, Turnover & DEX (Digital Employee Experience)

Following the pandemic and its continued impact on the global workforce, organizations are seeing an increase in stress, anxiety and isolation with their employees.
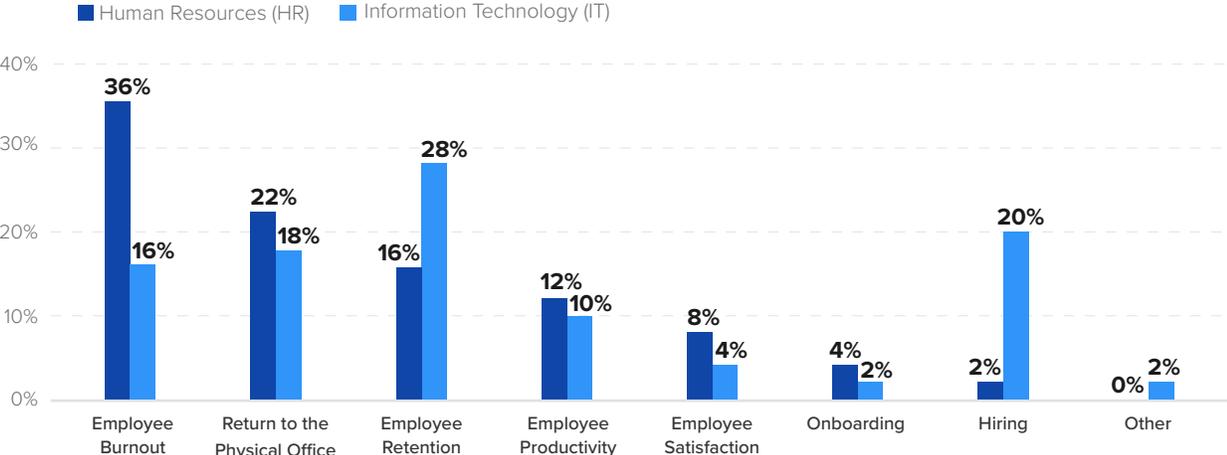
Employees continue to grapple with work-life balance and hybrid and remote working. These challenges combined with a hot job market cause employers to grow increasingly worried about the following:

- **Employee retention:** The practices organizations implement to keep employees happy at their current company.

- **Return to the physical office:** Planning and executing the support of a workforce returning to full-time or hybrid work.

- **Employee burnout:** A state of physical or emotional exhaustion that impacts mental health.

- **Hiring:** Difficulty filling open positions in a very competitive job market.

- **Employee productivity:** Removing all barriers to employees producing work.

- **Onboarding:** The period when a new hire acclimates to their role and the organization's values, culture, systems, and processes.

And the evidence couldn't be clearer in what HR and IT leaders reported:

What is your top challenge for the remainder of 2021?

■ Human Resources (HR)　　■ Information Technology (IT)

Challenge	HR	IT
Employee Burnout	36%	16%
Return to the Physical Office	22%	18%
Employee Retention	16%	28%
Employee Productivity	12%	10%
Employee Satisfaction	8%	4%
Onboarding	4%	2%
Hiring	2%	20%
Other	0%	2%

HR leaders report that employee burnout, retention, and managing a return to the physical office present the biggest challenges.

And IT shares similar concerns with regard to retaining employees and managing a return to the physical office. But IT is also struggling to hire the right people to help deal with their post-pandemic user experience problems.
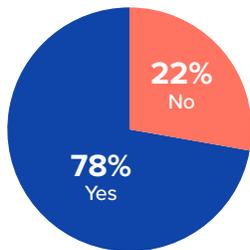
EXAMINING THE LINK BETWEEN DEX AND EMPLOYEE STRESS

Both HR and IT agree that poor IT services play a role in employee turnover and burnout.
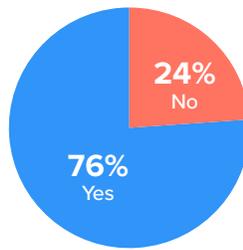
Technology

Do you think poor/unreliable IT services & equipment play a significant role in employee burnout or employee turnover?

Human Resources (HR)

22%
No

78%
Yes

Information Technology (IT)

24%
No

76%
Yes

And when you look at the overall employee experience, tech services and equipment play a significant role, with both ranking the topic as the third most important factor.

What factors do you think play the biggest role in employee turnover or burnout?

1. Poor salary, benefits, or career path (promotions)

2. Unhealthy work culture

3. **Unreliable IT service and equipment (in-office or remote)**

4. Difficult commute

5. Uncomfortable desk setup

6. Other

👍 Our Advice:

Clearly, HR and IT share many of the same sentiments and work challenges, so here are a few tips taken from real Nexthink customers.

Combatting Employee Burnout

No video? No problem.

▶ When it comes to being on back-to-back video calls, employees are drained. Our customers have instituted a few different best practices to combat this by limiting video calls.

- Instituting a Focus Friday where video meetings are not allowed.

- Encourage phone calls vs. video calls. Not every call has to be a video call. Instead, only make certain meetings video-focused and others just audio.

▶ Give people a break!

- To spare 5-10 minutes between meetings, IT can set Outlook settings so meeting lengths are defaulted to 25 and 50 minutes to allow for breaks.

▶ Remember: the key to making either of these best practices successful is that leaders practice this behavior. If your leaders can't be role models on behavior to prevent burnout, employees won't either.

Improving Employee Retention

▶ More than training videos

- When you are onboarding new employees, schedule check-ins for days 30, 60, and 90. These are opportunities to recognize successes and identify areas where the new hire may need some additional help.

- When the employee completes their 90-day onboarding, do not miss the opportunity to request additional onboarding feedback and use it to improve your program. Make sure to time the feedback prompt with the end of their onboarding to ensure relevant and timely feedback.

Next, we examine how each department interprets the other. How does each define their working relationship? Is there room for improvement and where?
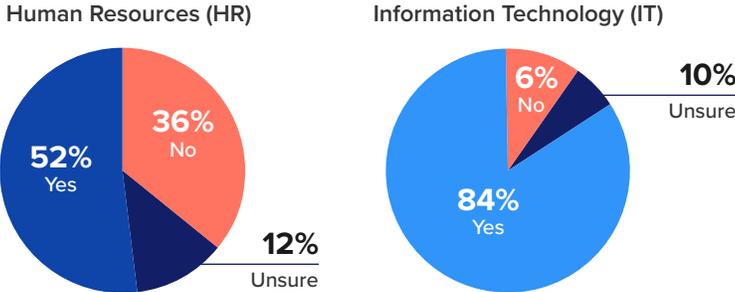
How is HR & IT's Relationship? It's Complicated

84% of the IT leaders we surveyed believe their department collaborates with HR, but when we asked the same question to HR, we received a different answer.
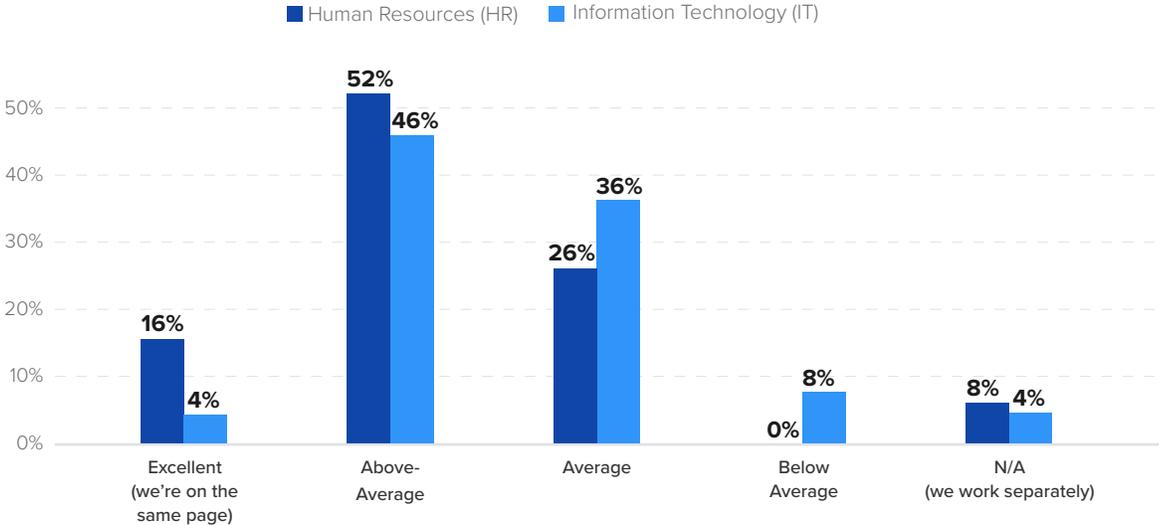
Nearly ½ of HR leaders (48%) in our survey said they either don't collaborate well with IT, or they weren't sure!

Does your IT and HR department collaborate with each other at all?

Human Resources (HR)

- 52% Yes
- 36% No
- 12% Unsure

Information Technology (IT)

- 84% Yes
- 6% No
- 10% Unsure

A considerable number of HR and IT leaders also report a lukewarm working relationship... complicated indeed.

How would you describe the collaboration between IT and HR?

Human Resources (HR) | Information Technology (IT)

	Excellent (we're on the same page)	Above-Average	Average	Below Average	N/A (we work separately)
Human Resources (HR)	16%	52%	26%	0%	8%
Information Technology (IT)	4%	46%	36%	8%	4%

👍 Our Advice:

In order to have a good working relationship, both parties need to think you have one. With the current disconnect between HR & IT, it is clear more work needs to be done.

IT is More Than Service Delivery

- In many organizations, IT is a service organization. Serving employees and delivering a positive digital employee experience. This dynamic often unfolds in how they work with other departments as well. Rather than telling IT what software to provision to improve employee engagement, our customers have had HR bring IT to the table and partner with them on the initiative from the start.

Sharing is Caring

- HR & IT have many overlapping objectives, as made clear by this survey. Our customers who have aligned their HR & IT goals across departments have been better able to prioritize projects and see faster results. Working in siloes is double the energy and half the results.

A primary reason why HR and IT struggle to work well together and combat their challenges is that both lack reliable, real-time DEX data. Next, we examine the topic of end user data and survey collection.
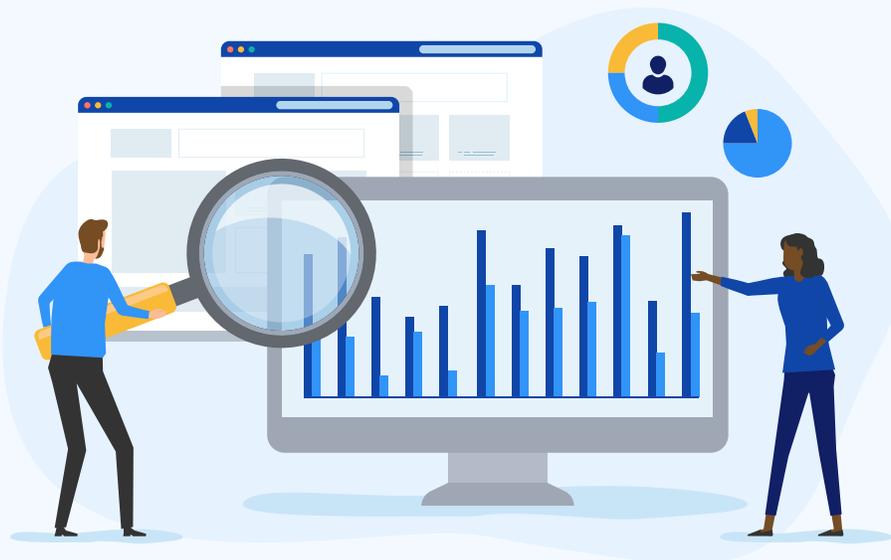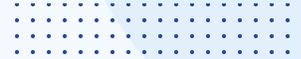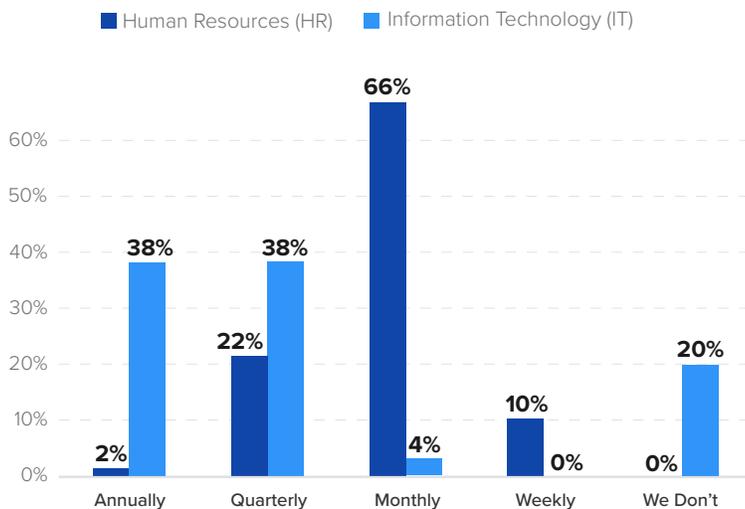
Answer Me! Improving Employee Data Collection & Quality

The decision-makers we surveyed revealed three significant problems:

1 HR & IT doesn't collect enough feedback from employees (although HR does send more surveys); and

How often do you send Digital Employee Experience surveys?

■ Human Resources (HR)   ■ Information Technology (IT)

	Annually	Quarterly	Monthly	Weekly	We Don't
HR	2%	22%	66%	10%	0%
IT	38%	38%	4%	0%	20%

It's shocking that IT appears to be taking an infrequent, if not hands-off approach, with sending surveys to employees. A majority of HR leaders, on the other hand, report that they at least send monthly surveys.

👍 Our Advice to IT:

When appropriate, utilize your HR teams to help strategize and write survey questions—they have experience with employee outreach and can serve as a valuable resource. Since HR typically designs and implements more surveys, IT can learn from their experience on phrasing questions, organizing layout, and timing. All of these factors influence response rates, which we see outlined next.

2 When HR & IT do send surveys, both struggle to collect meaningful feedback.

90% of HR leaders admit their response rates rarely, if ever, exceed 50%:

What percentage of employees typically respond to your surveys?

■ Human Resources (HR)　■ Information Technology (IT)
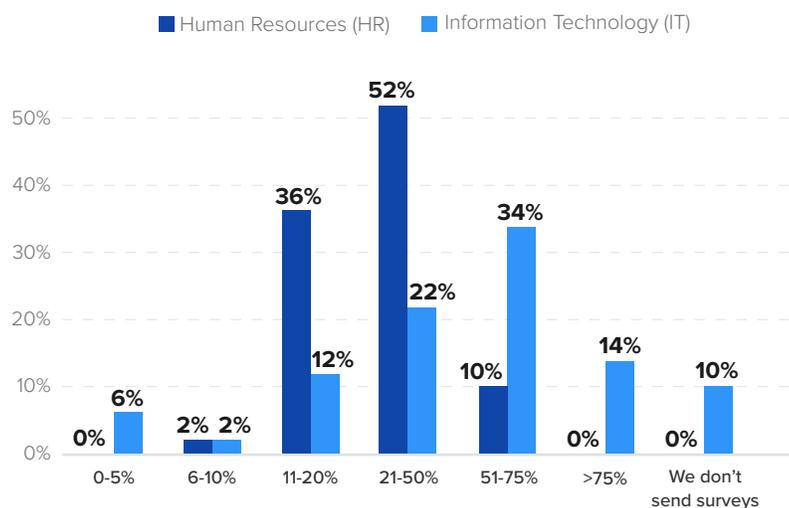
90%

90% of HR leaders admit their response rates rarely, if ever, exceed 50%

A larger percentage of IT leaders report better response rates, but a considerable amount (40%) still admit they cannot exceed 50% response rates.

Both HR & IT are searching for specific outcomes from their surveys, but feedback from employees isn't enough. They need more. It is not enough for HR & IT to rely on employee feedback alone. They need to correlate the feedback with actionable data based on the employee's digital experiences. Data like the following listed below.
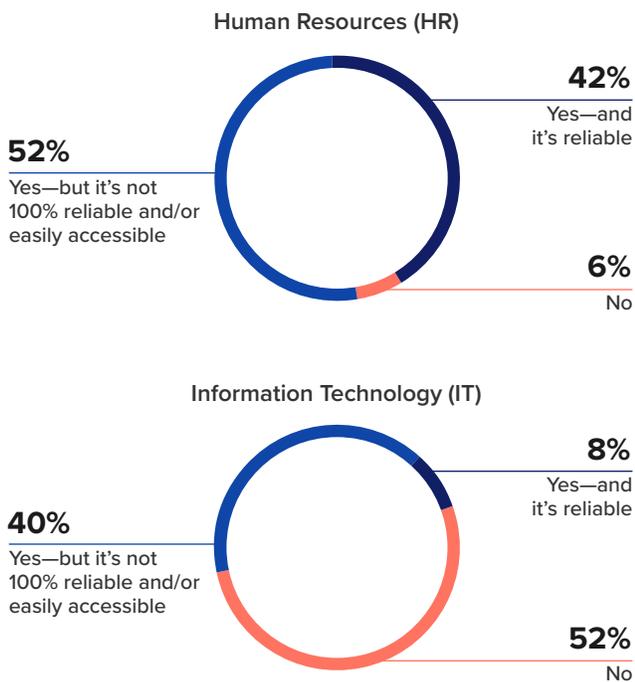
What information would be the most helpful to see about your workforce?

■ Human Resources (HR)　■ Information Technology (IT)
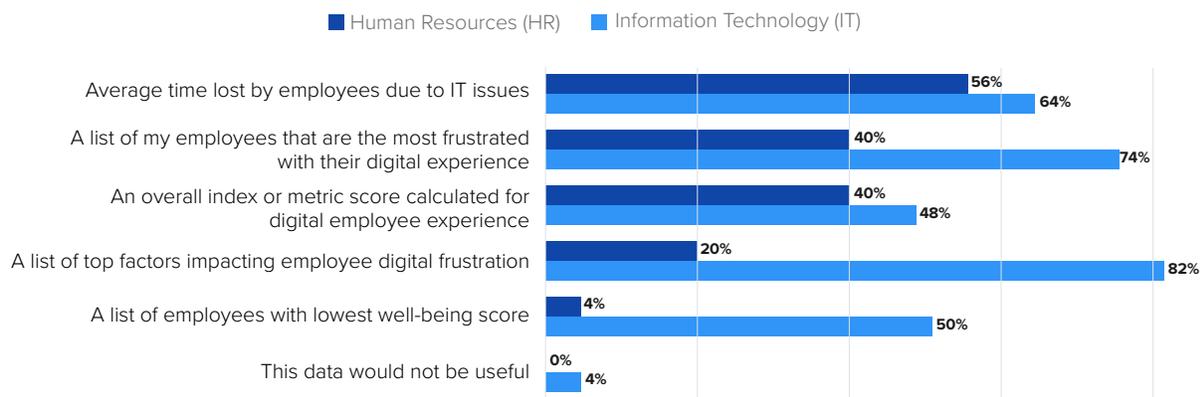
HR and IT leaders disagree about which employee analytics to track in order to understand their employees. Most IT leaders (82%) would like to know what is causing employees' digital frustrations, while most HR leaders (56%) would like to understand how much time employees are losing to IT issues.

3 Most HR & IT organizations either don't have access or don't realize they have access to this data today. And if they do have it, they don't trust it.

Does your IT team have access to this type of data today?

Human Resources (HR)

42%
Yes—and
it's reliable

52%
Yes—but it's not
100% reliable and/or
easily accessible

6%
No

Information Technology (IT)

8%
Yes—and
it's reliable

40%
Yes—but it's not
100% reliable and/or
easily accessible

52%
No

Roughly ½ of HR leaders feel like their survey data isn't reliable or easily accessible, and the same proportion of IT leaders report they cannot even access this information!

56%

56% of HR leaders would like to understand how much time employees are losing to IT issues

👍 Our Advice:

We consider employee burnout the opposite of employee engagement. If an employee is in a state of physical or emotional exhaustion that impacts their mental health, they are not fully engaged in their role. Not even close.

To achieve employee engagement, you must track burnout and other key employee data and be in a position to act on it, which is exactly what our customers do.

Here are a few lessons learned from our customers:

You can't fix what you can't see.

All of this DEX data exists today, plus more. It's not a matter of if HR and IT can see the data or if it is reliable. It's available; you just have to ask for it. First, it must be accessible. It cannot sit behind an IT wall. Our customers provide dashboards and reports that HR can leverage. Second, it must be actionable. Our customers work closely with HR to identify frustrated users and work with their managers to help remedy the situation. And lastly, they track their impact, looking for ways to improve and become more proactive.

Drive higher response rates.

Our customers see an 80% response rate on average to their surveys. They collect in-context real-time feedback using pop up surveys relevant to the employee's experience. Sending an annual survey is not enough. Then they correlate that data with existing DEX data to get the full digital employee experience view.

Conclusion

As this report made clear, when it comes to Employee Experience, HR and IT are stronger together.

Without the ability for HR & IT to partner to collect, measure and track Digital Employee Experience, the organization risks hurting employee engagement, productivity, wellbeing and losing the employee entirely.

This data exists today.

The grand alliance between HR and IT is more than a slogan; it should be a driving principle for any organization.
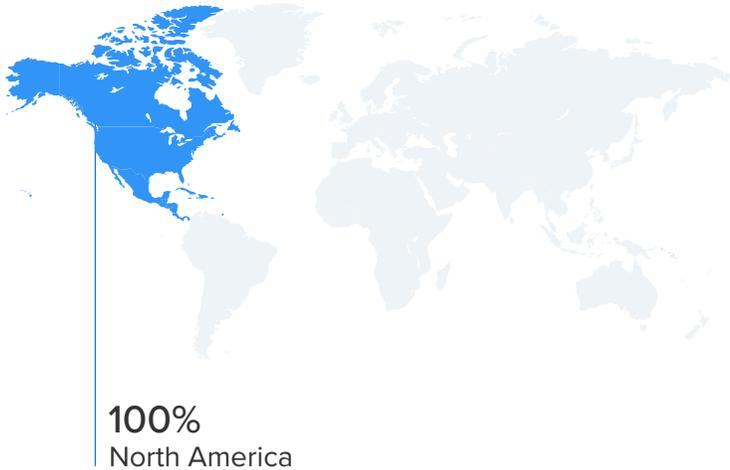
Interested in learning how you can form a grand alliance with your colleagues and tackle complicated DEX problems?
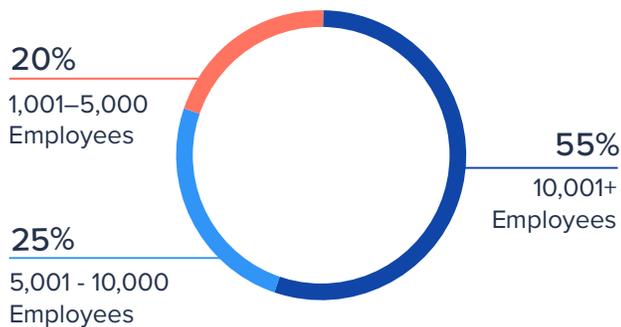
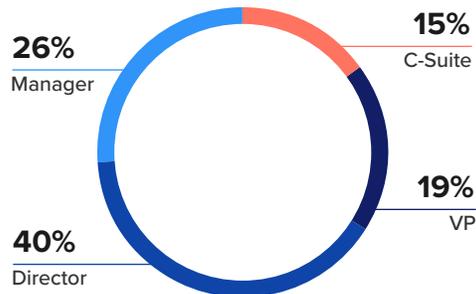Let's talk.

About this Report

Respondent Region

100%
North America

Respondent Company Size

20%
1,001–5,000 Employees

25%
5,001 - 10,000 Employees

55%
10,001+ Employees

Respondent Department

50%
HR

50%
IT

Respondent Title

26%
Manager

15%
C-Suite

40%
Director

19%
VP

ABOUT NEXTHINK

Nexthink is the global leader in Digital Employee Experience management. The company's products allow enterprises to create highly productive digital workplaces for their employees by delivering optimal end-user experiences. Through a unique combination of real-time analytics, automation and employee feedback across all endpoints, Nexthink helps IT teams meet the needs of the modern digital workplace.

Have questions about Nexthink Experience?

CONTACT US